

REMARKS

A first Office Action was mailed on June 9, 2004. Claims 1 - 28 are pending in the present application. With this response, Applicants amend claims 1 - 28. No new matter is introduced. Support for the amendments may be found, for example, with reference to Applicants' specification at page 9, line 11 through page 11, line 21 and Applicants' FIGs. 1 - 3.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 101

Claim 28 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as being directed to non-statutory subject matter (a computer program). Applicants amend claim 28 to recite "A computer, that executes a virtual space control program". Applicants submit that amended claim 28 now recites statutory subject matter, and respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §§ 102, 103

Claims 1 – 7, 9 – 16, 17 – 25 and 27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,766,079 to Kataoka et al. Claims 8, 17 and 26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kataoka. Applicants amend

claims 1 – 27 to further clarify the nature of their invention, and respectfully traverse these rejections.

In amended independent claim 1, Applicants claim:

A virtual space control method, comprising the steps of:

changing an orientation of a prescribed part of a virtual character in a virtual space; and

changing a screen image in response to the change in orientation of the prescribed part, wherein the screen image represents a virtual field of view defined by a viewpoint other than a viewpoint of the virtual character.

(Emphasis added)

Kataoka discloses an object direction control method and apparatus (see, e.g., abstract of Kataoka). These are applied, for example, to a tank game in which a line of sight (viewpoint) is determined on the basis of a steering angle of the tank (see, e.g., column 6, lines 1 – 67 of Kataoka). A screen display is determined based on selected position of a virtual camera with respect to the tank (see, e.g., FIGs. 7A through 7C of Kataoka). While Kataoka discloses that a direction of the camera may be dependent on the sight angle of the tank, unlike Applicants' claimed invention, Kataoka fails to explicitly disclose that a screen image may be changed such that the resulting virtual field of view is defined by a viewpoint other than that of the virtual character (see, e.g., column 6, lines 39 – 43 and 51 – 67 of Kataoka)

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claim 1 is not anticipated or made obvious by Kataoka, and is therefore allowable. Applicants apply similar arguments with respect to independent amended claims 10 and 19, and submit thereby that claims 10 and 19 are allowable. As claims 2 – 9, 11 – 18, and 20 – 27 each depend from one of allowable claims 1, 10, and 19, Applicants further submit that claims 2 – 9, 11 – 18, and 20 – 27 are allowable for at least this reason.

Applicants also submit that claims 4, 10 and 19 are allowable for additional reasons. Amended claim 4 recites:

4. The virtual space control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

detecting an occurrence of a prescribed event, and

wherein the step of changing the orientation includes a step of changing the orientation of the prescribed part in response to the occurrence of the prescribed event.

As disclosed by Applicants, the “prescribed event” of claim can represent a variety of events occurring in the virtual space (see, e.g., page 13, lines 4 – 13 of Applicants’ specification describing an example event as eye contact generated between two on-screen characters in a soccer game). While it is known in the prior art to change the orientation of a prescribed part such as a character on the basis of a controller command (see, e.g., page 2, lines 11 – 19 of Applicants’ specification), Applicants respectfully submit that Kataoka and Applicants’ admitted prior art (AAPA) fail to suggest or disclose changes to the orientation are based on the occurrence of a prescribed event in the virtual space. On these additional grounds, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 4, 10 and 19 recite allowable subject matter.

CONCLUSION

An earnest effort has been made to be fully responsive to the Examiner's objections. In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is believed that claims 1-28, consisting of independent claims 1, 10, 19 and 28, and the claims dependent therefrom, are in condition for allowance. Passage of this case to allowance is earnestly solicited. However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in

condition for allowance, he or she is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below prior to issuing a further Action.

Any fee due with this paper may be charged on Deposit Account 50-1290.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Bean", written over a horizontal line.

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